



## Acts 26:1-32

### Paul's Apologia

In this series of messages we have been observing Jesus working with men and women before and after His resurrection. We have observed the resurrected Christ on the first Easter walking along the road to Emmaus talking to two despondent travelers. For some unknown reason they do not recognize Him until He reveals Himself to them at the supper table. Luke tells us, "When He had reclined *at the table* with them, He took the bread and blessed *it*, and breaking *it*, He *began* giving *it* to them. Then their eyes were opened and they recognized Him; and He vanished from their sight. They said to one another, 'Were not our hearts burning within us while He was speaking to us on the road, while He was explaining the Scriptures to us?' (Luke 24:31-33). These two people who had just seen the risen Savior in person hurried back to Jerusalem to tell the disciples.

When the two travelers arrived at the place where all the disciples, with the exception of Thomas, were gathered behind locked doors for fear of the Jews, they were suddenly surprised when Jesus appeared in the room and greeted them with His familiar voice. The apostle John writes in 20:19-20, "So when it was evening on that day, the first *day* of the week, and when the doors were shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in their midst and said to them, 'Peace *be* with you.' And when He had said this, showed them both His hands and His side. The disciples then rejoiced when they saw the Lord." We don't know why Thomas wasn't there with the others when Jesus came, but we are made aware of his reaction to the message of the resurrected Christ. The other disciples were excitedly telling him, "We have seen the Lord!" But he said, "Unless I see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe" (v. 25). Jesus did not rush in to make him feel good; He made Thomas wait eight days. As far as we know there were no other appearances of Jesus for a week and then with Thomas in the group in the same room; "Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst, and said, 'Peace be to you.'" Can you imagine for a moment what Thomas must have seen, heard and felt when Jesus turned to him and said, "Reach here your fingers, and see My hands; and reach here your hand, and put it into My side; and be not unbelieving, but believing." Jesus almost verbatim quotes Thomas' words before the assembled disciples! The response of Thomas at that moment was to declare, "My Lord and my God!" (v. 28).

Jesus was teaching His disciples to trust Him when He was no longer visible. They had enjoyed the intimate fellowship of His presence at meals, while walking with Him, listening to Him teach, etc. But until His resurrection they could see Him with their naked eyes. Now He was just as near and ever present as He demonstrated to Thomas even though they could not see Him. No one told Jesus what Thomas said, but He was very aware of Thomas' reaction to His resurrection.

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In that context Jesus said to him, 'Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed *are* they who did not see, and *yet* believed' (v. 29). That blessing includes you and me. Thomas could have experienced it, too. But he chose to see before he would believe. He could have had the same blessing as we have if he had believed that Jesus was alive based upon the testimony of the other witnesses. The Day is coming when we shall see Him (1 John 3:3).

The thing I want to emphasize is that this is the manner in which Jesus comes to us. All that Jesus began to do and teach in His incarnate body He continues to do and teach through His mystical body of believers. He just does it through a different body —you and me. We see this beautifully illustrated in the life of the apostle Paul who persistently got himself in trouble over this issue of the resurrection of Jesus Christ. If he and the other apostles had kept quiet about the resurrection they would not have been in prison so much and none of them would have been murdered. It is the resurrection of Jesus that is so vital to Christianity. Christianity is Christ — the crucified and risen Christ. The cross without the resurrection has no meaning and no power to save. Christ crucified was a stumbling block to the Greeks and foolishness to the Jews. The message of the gospel is that Jesus Christ died for our sins on the cross as our substitute and rose from the dead. He is alive right now and He is here with us. Take the resurrection away and the cross is a tragedy, a catastrophe and meaningless blunder. But Christ crucified and raised from the dead is eternal life. In Acts chapter twenty-six we see the risen Christ appearing to Saul of Tarsus and then working in and through him to speak to a group of government officials.

## **THE ARREST OF PAUL**

The apostle Paul was been walking with Christ for about thirty years when we meet him in jail. He had set off a riot in Jerusalem, rescued by the Roman soldiers and sent to Caesarea. After two years in jail in Caesarea he will be transferred to Rome. Acts chapters 21-25 tells about Paul's trip to Jerusalem with other Hebrew-Christian believers to deliver a contribution to the believers who are suffering persecution. While in the Temple Paul was mobbed by a group of thugs and rescued by the Romans soldiers. On various occasions the Roman governor Felix would listen to Paul, but kept putting off a decision hoping Paul would pay him a bribe. During this two year period there was an outbreak of mob violence and Felix dispatched troops to aid the Gentiles. Thousands of Jews were killed and the troops looted the houses of the wealthiest Jews. The Jewish leaders reported the event to the Roman emperor who sent a new Roman governor. When Festus arrived to relieve Felix of his duties Paul was still left a prisoner.

Herod Agrippa II arrived in Caesarea to pay his respects to his new Roman superior, so Festus appealed to him for help with his dilemma with Paul's case. King Agrippa was anxious to interview Paul.

Secular historians tell us Herod Agrippa II had a fine physique and magnificent social presence. He was well educated and had great natural ability. He was born about the time Jesus died. He was a typical politician.

ability. He was born about the time Jesus died. He was a typical politician. He was all for the Jewish people until they rebelled against Rome. Then he quickly sided with Rome and fought against the Jewish people. This Herod is the great grandson of the murderer of John the Baptist and the innocent children in Bethlehem when Jesus was born. His own father murdered James the head of the Jerusalem church.

Herod Agrippa II is accompanied to the Governor's mansion with Bernice, his sister with whom he has an incestuous relationship. It was an open scandal to both Jews and Gentiles. Jewish opinion is against him at this time. He is "flagrantly sensuous, a slave to his passions. He had become quite careless about public opinion. . . . He cared nothing as is evidenced by the fact of bringing Bernice with him." Yet, Paul considers Herod Agrippa II an, "Expert in all the questions and customs which are among the Jews." His findings about Paul is strictly accurate, "This man might have been set at liberty if he had not appealed unto Caesar."

Campbell Morgan writes of the occasion. "Our attention must now be focused upon the two men confronting each other; the one standing, a prisoner; and the other seated, in the dignity of his kingly office. Agrippa and Paul were face to face, the one a king, robed and enthroned; the other a prisoner, chained and arraigned; the one an expert in all the technicalities of the Hebrew economy, as the Rabbinical writers testify; the other a man equally expert in the same technicalities, but knowing the spiritual values and intentions thereof; the one given over to sin and impurity; the other glorifying in deliverance from the dominion of sin; the one an enslaved king; the other an enthroned prisoner" (*Acts of the Apostles*, p 519).

### **THE ADDRESS OF PAUL (26:1-3)**

Seated in front of Paul is King Agrippa II, Bernice, the Roman governor Festus, the military commanders and their guests. It was a pagan assembly, designed to entertain Agrippa and Bernice and their guests. What would you say if you were in Paul's shoes? What kind of defense would you present to this royal group? Surely they have the power to set him free. What will be their response?

Paul seizes the opportunity to share Christ. His theme before the assembled group is, "Not I but Christ. I have been crucified . . . nevertheless I live. Christ lives in me; therefore I live. I am here because Jesus Christ is alive and the hope of the resurrection."

When Agrippa said to Paul, "You are permitted to speak for yourself," Paul stretched out his hand in gesture, still chained to the Roman soldier, and proceeded to give his defense (Acts 26:1). He graciously addresses the officials and considers himself "fortunate" to have this opportunity to make his defense before Agrippa. "Especially because you are an expert in all customs and questions among the Jews; therefore I beg you to listen to me patiently" (v. 3). We have but a brief epitome of Paul's message here. Paul asked for patience because he was going to present a lengthy statement of the gospel.

### **THE APOLOGIA OF PAUL (26:4-23)**

Paul seizes the opportunity to share the gospel of Jesus Christ. His presentation is rather simple. He begins with his life as a Jewish person *before* he became a Hebrew Christian. Then he tells them when he believed on Jesus Christ as the risen Savior. He finishes his message with what his life has been like since becoming a follower of Jesus Christ. This is all God asks us to do when we share our testimonies. It is very simple: this is what I was like before I became a Christian. This is when I put my faith in Christ as my Savior and this is what my life has been like as a believer.

### *My life before Christ (vv. 4-11)*

This is what "my manner of life was like from my youth up" (v. 4). He sat at the feet of the famous teacher Gamaliel.

Moreover, "I lived *as* a Pharisee according to the strictest sect of our religion" (v. 5). The Talmud makes it plain what the life of a Pharisee was, and Paul played the game to the full by the rules of the Pharisees (Gal. 1:14; Phil. 3:5f). In deed, Paul had become one of the leaders and stars of hope for this Jewish sect.

Paul had been a faithful Pharisee with a strong hope in the resurrection of the dead. In verses 6-8 he introduces the reason he is on trial. It is for the hope of the resurrection and of the promised Messiah (13:32). There could be no fulfillment of Israel's ancient hope apart from the resurrection. Paul's argument shows that his life in Christ is a real development of the best in Pharisaism. In his letters to the Galatian and Roman churches he proves that the children of faith are the real seed of Abraham. As absurd as it may seem the reason the Jewish people were persecuting him because of their own hope in the promise God had given them long ago.

Paul states the core of his defense in verses 6-8: "And now I am standing trial for the hope of the promise made by God to our fathers; *the promise* to which our twelve tribes hope to attain, as they earnestly serve *God* night and day. And for this hope, O King, I am being accused by Jews. Why is it considered incredible among you *people* if God does raise the dead?" They fervently believed in God as the raiser of the dead. Paul's argument is that truth has been validated in the raising of the dead, the long-expected Messiah of Israel. "Why would those who believed in the resurrection of the dead refuse to believe that God had in fact raised up Jesus, and so declared Him to be the Son of God? If God did not raise up Jesus, why believe that he raises the dead at all?" (F. F. Bruce, *The Book of Acts*, pp. 489-90).

W. E. Vine helps us understand this hope. He writes, "Hope describes (a) the happy anticipation of good (the most frequent significance), e.g., Tit. 1:2; 1 Pet. 1:21; (b) the ground upon which hope is based, Acts 16:19; Col. 1:27, Christ in you the hope of glory; (c) the object upon which the hope is fixed, e.g., 1 Tim. 1:1." Vine and Hogg write:

Various phrases are used with the word hope, in Paul's Epistles and speeches: (1) Acts 23:6, the hope and resurrection of the dead; this has been regarded as a hendiadys (one by means of two), i.e., the hope of the resurrection; but the *kai*, and, is epexegetic, defining the hope, namely, the resurrection; (2) Acts 26:6, 7, the hope of the promise (i.e., the fulfillment of the promise) made unto the fathers; (3) Gal. 5:5, the hope of righteousness; i.e., the believer's complete conformity to God's will, at the Coming of Christ; (4) Col. 1:23, the hope of the Gospel, i.e., the hope of the fulfillment of all the promises presented in the Gospel; cp. 1:5; (5) Rom. 5:2, (the) hope of the glory of God, i.e., as in Tit. 2:13, the blessed hope and appearing of the glory of our great God and Saviour Jesus Christ; cp. Col. 1:27; (6) 1 Thess. 5:8, the hope of salvation, i.e., of the Rapture of believers, to take place at the opening of the Parousia of Christ; (7) Eph. 1:18, the hope of His (God's) calling, i.e., the prospect before those who respond to His call in the Gospel; (8) Eph. 4:4, the hope of your calling, the same as (7), but regarded from the point of view of the called; (9) Tit. 1:2, and 3:7, the hope of eternal life, i.e., the full manifestation and realization of that life which is already the believer's possession; (10) Acts 28:20, the hope of Israel, i.e., the expectation of the coming of the Messiah. See Notes on Galatians by Hogg and Vine, pp. 248, 249 (*Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*).

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The assumption for Paul is God does raise dead people, and only God can do it. It is for this hope in the resurrection that he is on trial. If he would simply drop this idea of the resurrection of Jesus Christ he could go free. But that is the critical issue of Christianity. ". . . if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith also is vain" (1 Corinthians 15:14).

Paul tells them of his commitment to Judaism and his prior hostility to the followers of Christ. He persecuted them with zeal. In the past he did "many things hostile to the name of Jesus of Nazareth" (v. 9). He describes himself as a fierce opponent to Christianity. "And this is just what I did in Jerusalem; not only did I lock up many of the saints in prisons, having received authority from the chief priests, but also when they were being put to death I cast my vote against them. And as I punished them often in all the synagogues, I tried to force them to blaspheme; and being furiously enraged at them, I kept pursuing them even to foreign cities" (vv. 10-11). He did not limit his efforts to Jerusalem and Judaea, but pursued them even into the Gentile cities and as far away as Damascus.

### *I met the risen Christ (vv. 12-18)*

Let's let Paul tell us in his own words this beautiful encounter with the risen Christ.

"While so engaged as I was journeying to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests, at midday, O King, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining all around me and those who were journeying with me. And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, Sàul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads. And I said, Who are You, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom you are persecuting (vv. 12-15).

He describes the supernatural character of the light in verse thirteen. The "light from heaven" at noonday was literally, "above the brightness of the sun." It was a lightning flash that blinded him on the road.

Here is the risen Christ coming to Saul of Tarsus at midday. This encounter with the risen Christ changed everything in his life. God got his attention on the road to Damascus and it was "above the natural, and out of the ordinary; definite, positive, real." It was marvelous and startling to Paul. The risen Christ made Saul of Tarsus the pioneer messenger of the fact of the resurrection. It was all of grace.

Paul says in vv. 14-15, "And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, Sàul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads. And I said, Who are You, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom you are persecuting."

The "goads" in v. 14 is the iron goad in the ploughman's hand as he pricks the ox to get his attention and make him go. Note plural here (goads) and is present active infinitive so that the idea is tō keep on kicking against goads (Robertson).

The New Testament scholar William Barclay gives this background for the use of the goad. "When a young ox was first yoked it tried to kick its way out. If it was yoked to one handed plough, the ploughman held in his hand a long staff with a sharpened end which he held close to the ox's heels so that every time it kicked it was jagged with the spike. If it was yoked to a wagon, the front of the wagon had a bar studded with wooden spikes which jagged the ox if it kicked. The young ox had to learn submission the hard way and so did Paul" (*DSB, Acts of the Apostles*, p. 178).

The goad, perhaps the arguments of Stephen, kept on pricking Paul's conscience until at last the truth that Jesus Christ was risen penetrated his heart. The full realization came when Christ appeared to Paul in person and called his name. From that moment on Paul knew but one Master.

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With the call to salvation came responsibility for being a faithful witness to the risen Christ. Paul was saved to serve. He began the day as an "apostle of the Sanhedrin" on his way to Damascus to hunt down and persecute believers, but it ended as an apostle of Jesus Christ.

He continues the words of the resurrected Jesus to him in verses 16-18, "But get up and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; rescuing you from the *Jewish* people and from the Gentiles, to whom I am sending you, to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me. " Paul has been commissioned by the Master to take the gospel of the risen Savior to the Gentiles in the reign beyond.

Christ comes to a man and enables him to see things as he has never seen them before. He sees life through the eyes of God. He turns men from the darkness to the light and transfers him from the power of darkness to the power of God in Christ.

Paul was an eyewitness to the resurrected Christ. Robertson says, "Paul is thus a personal eyewitness of the Risen Christ (Luke 1:1; I Cor. 4:1; 9:1). . . . These important words of Jesus to Paul give his justification to this cultured audience for his response to the command of Jesus. This was the turning point in Paul's career and it was a step forward and upward."

### *This is what my life in Christ has been like since that day I met Him (vv. 19-23)*

Paul continues with what has been the character and pattern of his life since trusting Christ in verses 19-21. "So, King Agrippa, I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision, but *kept* declaring both to those of Damascus first, and *also* at Jerusalem and *then* throughout all the region of Judea, and *even* to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance. For this reason *some* Jews seized me in the temple and tried to put me to death."

Please don't miss those important words in verse 19, "Consequently . . . I did not prove disobedient to the heavenly vision . . ." G. H. Lang in *The Gospel of the Kingdom* said, "None more firmly than Paul rejected works, before or after conversion, as a ground of salvation; none more firmly demanded good works as a consequence of salvation."

Here is a changed man. Just as he had been an "apostle of the Sanhedrin" now he is an apostle of Jesus who "*kept* declaring both to those of Damascus first, and *also* at Jerusalem and *then* throughout all the region of Judea, and *even* to the Gentiles, that they should repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance" (v. 20).

This is the reason why "some Jews seized me in the temple and tried to put me to death" (v. 21). I am here Paul says in v. 22 because God helped me. God is Paul's ally. All of the plots of the Jews against Paul had failed so far because God interrupted them. Paul is His witness.

Paul stresses that what he is saying is "nothing but what the Prophets and Moses said was going to take place; that the Christ (Messiah) was to suffer, and that by reason of His resurrection from the dead he should be the first to proclaim light both to the Jewish people and to the Gentiles" (vv. 22b-23). We have been reading his outline or summary, but I think probably in his full message he brought together passage after passage from the Hebrew Scriptures that found their fulfillment in the life, death and resurrection of Christ.

passage from the Hebrew Scriptures that found their fulfillment in the life, death and resurrection of Christ. He answers such Messianic questions as: "Must the Messiah suffer?" "Must he rise from the dead?" "Must He bring the light of salvation to the people of Israel?" "Must the Gentiles be saved as well?"

A. T. Robertson says, "Here alone in New Testament Paul is speaking from the Jewish point of view. Most rabbis had not rightly understood Isaiah 53. When the Baptist called Jesus 'the Lamb of God' (John 1:29) it was a startling idea. . . The Cross of Christ was a stumbling-block to the rabbis. . . Others had been raised from the dead, but Christ is the first who arose from the dead and no longer dies (Rom. 6:19) and proclaims light." The thing that drove the Jewish mob out of control in his speech from the stairs (22:21f) was the word "Gentiles." "So it is here, only not because of that word, but because of the word 'resurrection' [*anastasis*]" (Robertson).

At that point the Roman governor Festus became unglued. He could handle it no longer.

### **THE APPEAL OF PAUL (26:24-32)**

Kenneth Wuest in his expanded translation writes: And as he was saying these things in his defense, Festus says with a loud voice, You are going insane, Paul. Your vast learning is turning you around to insanity. But Paul says, I am not going insane, most illustrious Festus. But words of truth and soundness of mind am I uttering; for the King knows about these things before whom I also am speaking freely, for I am persuaded that none of these things is hidden from him, for this thing has not taken place in a secret place. Are you believing, King Agrippa, the prophets? I know positively that you are believing. But Agrippa says to Paul, With but [such] little persuasion you are attempting to make me a Christian. But Paul said, I am I am praying to God that whether by little or by much persuasion not only you but also all who are hearing me today would become such as even I am, except these chains. "

That is not an uncommon reaction of the lost world. Verse 24 tells us Festus, with great excitement, interrupts Paul while he was still speaking. "You are mad." It is an old word for raving. We have the expression in our day, "You are raving mad!" See also John 10:20; Acts 12:15; I Cor. 14:23. The enthusiasm of Paul was too much for poor old Festus when he had spoken of visions and resurrection from the dead (verse 8). You are going mad (linear present), Festus means. Festus thought that Paul's much learning of the Hebrew Scriptures to which he had referred was turning his head to madness (wheels in his head) and he was going mad right before them all. The old word *mania* (our mania, frenzy, cf. maniac) occurs here only in New Testament (Robertson, *Grammar*, pp. 418, 420).

F. F. Bruce catches the heart of Festus' outrage, "You're mad, Paul, you're mad, all this study is driving you crazy."

Vine says it means "to be mad, to rave, is said of one who so speaks that he appears to be out of his mind." "You are beside yourself."

Paul was not ruffled by the rude and excited interruption of Festus, but speaks with perfect courtesy in his reply words of truth and soberness. He continues to speak boldly, or freely. He was preaching boldly or speaking freely before these government officials.

While *Paul* was saying this in his defense, Festus \*said in a loud voice, Paul, you are out of your mind! *Your* great learning is driving you mad. But Paul \*said, I am not out of my mind, most excellent Festus, but I utter words of sober truth. For the king knows about these matters, and I speak to him also with confidence, since I am persuaded that none of these things escape his notice; for this has not been done in a corner. King Agrippa, do you believe the Prophets? I know that you do (vv. 24-27).

Agrippa, do you believe the Prophets? I know that you do (vv. 24-27).

"To Paul's way of thinking anyone who believed the prophets and compared their predictions with the historical facts concerning Jesus of Nazareth must acknowledge the truth of Christianity. 'You believe the prophets, don't you, Your Majesty? I know you do!'" (Bruce, p. 495). Paul's argument was simply the gospel that he preached contained "nothing but what the prophets and Moses did say should come."

But Herod Agrippa's reaction was rejection. He was embarrassed by Paul's appeal. Paul could hardly imagine any expert in the Jewish religion rejecting his conclusion. However Agrippa contemptuously dismissed a possibility of becoming a Christian. Agrippa *replied* to Paul, "If a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian (v. 28). Quite literally Agrippa said, "With a very little are you trying to make me a Christian." The emphasis is, "Me . . . Christian?" "You are trying to make me play the Christian." No way was Agrippa going to be maneuvered into that position. He was dismissing Paul and his arguments as being of little weight with him. He closed the door of appointment of becoming a Christian. The door was open but he had no desire of entering. Jesus had come to Agrippa through His messenger the apostle Paul and Herod contemptuously dismissed the opportunity to receive Christ.

Paul had cornered Agrippa by this direct challenge. As the Jew in charge of the temple he was bound to confess his faith in the prophets. But Paul had interpreted the prophets about the Messiah in a way that fell in with his claim that Jesus was the Messiah raised from the dead. To say, Yes would place himself in Paul's hands. To say No would mean that he did not believe the prophets. Agrippa had listened with the keenest interest, but he slipped out of the coils with skillfulness and a touch of humor.

Agrippa had not come to this meeting with the view of making a serious commitment to Jesus Christ. Though he clearly understands Paul's reasoning and understanding of the Hebrew Scriptures he is not willing to sacrifice his political ambitions. In many cultures there is a price to be paid in becoming a follower of Jesus Christ. Paul had been kept in prison because the Roman leaders did not have the moral courage to release him even though they knew he was innocent. Felix and Festus were both afraid to antagonize the majority. They knew the political price other governors had paid because of the Jewish people. It hasn't really changed even in our day.

Agrippa *replied* to Paul, "If a short time you will persuade me to become a Christian. "

And Paul *said*, "I would wish to God, that whether in a short or long time, not only you, but also all who hear me this day, might become such as I am, except for these chains. "

Robertson, "Most likely the idea is 'in (or with) small effort you are trying to persuade [*peitheis*], me in order to make me a Christian.' . . . The tone of Agrippa is ironical, but not unpleasant. He pushes it aside with a shrug of the shoulders. The use of 'Christian' is natural here as in the other two instances (11:26; I Peter 4:16)."

In verse 29 Paul responds to Agrippa's sarcasm, "both in little and in great, or both with little and with great pains or both in some measure and in great measure. Paul takes kindly the sarcasm of Agrippa. Paul lifts his right-manacled hand with exquisite grace and good feeling, "Except for these chains."

The group of dignitaries left speaking to one another, in eager conversation about Paul's wonderful speech. "This man might have been set free if he had not appealed to Caesar," was the unanimous conclusion of all these dignitaries (Romans, Jews, Greeks) as it was of Festus before (25:25).

But Paul had not won any of them to Christ. The conclusion leaves Festus in a predicament. Why had he not



But Paul had not won any of them to Christ. The conclusion leaves Festus in a predicament. Why had he not set Paul free before this? Robertson concludes, "But Paul *only* appealed to Caesar after Festus had tried to shift him back to Jerusalem and had refused to set him free in Caesarea. Festus comes out with no honor in the case. Since Agrippa was a favorite at court perhaps Festus would be willing to write favorably to Caesar."

The prisoner of Christ looked into the faces of those sitting about him and said that he would to God they were all as he was in Christ. The presence of Christ flamed to glory and put to naught the tinsel and gaudy earthly splendor of royalty. The risen and ascended, ever present Lord Jesus Christ was speaking in fullness of power through His servant Paul.

There was a passion to win Herod Agrippa II and the whole group of government officials to Christ. Paul the prisoner of Christ in chains was free, and the whole group of free men was in bondage of sin and unbelief. Paul was the prisoner wearing his fetters and the impression you feel is he is the "dominating personality in the scene" and Agrippa and his cohort are on trial. The gospel of Jesus Christ always presents us with a decision. How then shall we live? By their decision each of those listeners that day remained captives to sin and unbelief.

## **SOME ABIDING PRINCIPLES**

"I was not disobedient to my heavenly vision." Paul could say 30 years later when Christ came and convicted my heart I was *obedient*. Now how will you respond to the invitation of Christ?

Festus, a Roman pagan, thought the resurrection made Paul a mad man. He rejected Christ that day, and according to Barclay died after only two years in office.

The reaction of Herod, "With but a little persuasion you would fain make me a Christian." And there is no indication that Herod or his royal company put their trust in Christ. F. F. Bruce tells us after the Jewish war of A. D. 66, Jewish extremists burnt down Bernice's palace at Jerusalem along with Agrippa's. In deed, Bernice, the sister of Felix's wife Drusilla went on to consort with General Titus, Vespasian's son and heir. When she came to Rome with Agrippa in A. D. 75 she lived with Titus and his wife, and Titus would have contracted a formal marriage with her but for the strong disapproval of the Roman people.

Paul's final appeal: "I would to God that whether with little or with much, not you only, but also all that hear me this day, might become such as I am, except these bonds." Remember who was listening to Paul? Bernice, bedecked with her fine jewels, and Festus in his scarlet robe of the Roman governor that he wore on state occasions, and Agrippa in his royal robes and gold circlet of crown, the military leaders in their uniforms who accompanied the king, their solid phalanx of Roman legionaries on ceremonial guard in the back of the governor with "great pomp." All of these powerful influential figures of Jewish and Roman state listened and left without Christ.

Conviction does not make you a Christian. Being convinced does not make you a believer. Conviction must lead to commitment and submission to Christ.

The center of Paul's whole message was the resurrection of Christ. His witness is that of the risen Savior who is gloriously present. "For Paul every day is Easter Day."

God sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to die on the cross for you. Jesus shed His blood for your sins. All your sins were put on Him on the cross. And then He was buried, He rose again on the third day and now He is alive and ready to come into your heart today.

What will you do with Jesus Christ? Will you say to God, "I am a sinner? I'm sorry for my sins. I'm willing to change my way of life. But, God You will have to help me. I've tried and I can't. I need your help." And just like the apostle Paul, Christ will come and He will draw you to the cross and He will live in your life by means of the Holy Spirit. The supernatural power of God is available to you to live the Christian life. "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you shall be saved today."

If you need help in becoming a Christian here is [A Free Gift for You](#).

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Series: People in the Life of Christ

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Wil is a graduate of William Carey University, B. A.; New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary, Th. M.; and Azusa Pacific University, M. A. He has pastored in Panama, Ecuador and the U. S, and served for over 20 years as missionary in Ecuador and Honduras. He had a daily expository Bible teaching ministry head in over 100 countries for ten years. He continues to seek opportunities to be personally involved in world missions. Wil and his wife Ann have three grown daughters. He currently serves as a Baptist pastor and teaches seminary extension courses in Honduras.

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